

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9643

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPRE 4439

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MY, SN

SUBJ: RAZAK VISIT MOVES MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE RELATIONS

TOWARD MORE CORDIAL, BUSINESSLIKE BASIS

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 4929

SUMMARY. RAZAK VISIT TO SINGAPORE CAME OFF AS PLANNED
RESULTING IN SMALL BUT NEVERTHELESS SIGNIFICANT PLUS
FOR SINGAPORE-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH NO
AGREEMENTS ON SPECIFIC BILATERAL PROBLEMS WERE ANNOUNCED
OR PROBABLY EVEN REACHED IN PRIVATE, ATMOSPHERICS
REFLECTED DETERMINATION OF BOTH LEE AND RAZAK TO
CREATE PUBLIC IMPRESSION THAT BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE

BEEN PLACED ON SOLID, CORDIAL, BUSINESSLIKE FOOTING.
EMBASSY HAS NOT YET RECEIVED ANY ACCOUNT OF SUBSTANCE
OF RAZAK'S TWO HOUR PRIATE MEETING WITH LEE OR HIS
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOH AND OTHER GOS MINISTERS. THESE

WILL BE REPORTED AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE. HOWEVER.
EARLY INDICATION ARE THAT PRINCIPAL RESULTS OF VISIT
WILL BE INCREASED EXCHANGE OF MINISTERIAL AND OFFICIAL
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VISITS AND EFFORT TO LESSEN COMPETITIVE

ONE-UP-MANSHIP BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF TWO COUNTRIES.
END SUMMARY.

1. MALAYSIAN PM RAZAK AND WIFE, ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER FOR SPECIAL FUNCTIONS MICHAEL CHEN, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MFA, TAN SRI ZAITON, AND OTHER GOM OFFICIAL, VISITED SINGAPORE NOVEMBER 13-15. DURING STAY, RAZAK HAD TALKS WITH PM LEE KUAN YEW, DEPUTY PM AND DEFENSE MINISTER GOH KENG SWEE, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS CHUA SIAN CHIN AND MINISTER FOR FINANCE HON SUI SEN. HE ALSO PAID COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT SHEARES. IN ADDITION, MICHAEL CHEN MET SEPARATELY WITH MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, LIM KIM SAN.

2. VISIT WAS CONDUCTED IN CORDIAL, BUSINESSLIKE ATMOSPHERE AND WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE PROTOCOL. LEE AND RAZAK MET ALONE FOR OVER TWO HOURS AND REPORTEDLY EMERGED RELAXED AND FRIENDLY. NO COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED AT END OF VISIT, SO ONLY PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE TOASTS OF TWO PMs AT DINNER HOSTED BY LEE NOVEMBER 14 AT ISTANA AND PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY RAZAK ON NOVEMBER 15.

3. IN HIS TOAST, LEE COMMENTED ON FAST MOVING WORLD EVENTS AND THEIR UNPREDICTABILITY. HE COMPLIMENTED RAZAK FOR PUTTING BILATERAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE AGAINST THESE OTHER BROADER ISSUES. HE STATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN ABLE TO TALK "EASILY AND WITH CANDOUR" AND THAT

THEY HAD FINALLY ESTABLISHED AN "EQUABLE RELATIONSHIP." HE BLAMED OFFICERS OF BOTH COUNTRIES FOR CAUSING PREVIOUS PETTY IRRITANTS, AND OBSERVED THAT "GIVEN A LITTLE MORE TIME WE SHALL HAVE LESS OF SUCH PROBLEMS AS OFFICERS ON BOTH SIDES HOIST IN THE MOOD WHICH PREVAILED IN OUR DISCUSSIONS." LEE CONCLUDED BY STRESSING THE NEED "FOR BOTH OURSELVES AND OUR MINISTERS TO KEEP IN TOUCH, FOR GREAT EVENTS ARE TAKING PLACE AND THE FUTURE APPEARS LADEN WITH SURPRISES."

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4. FOR HIS PART, PM RAZA TOUCHED ON INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS WHICH HAVE BOUND TWO COUNTRIES. ECHOING THEME

REPORTED REFTTEL, RAZAK COMMENTED THESE RELATIONS ARE BASED ON MUCH FIRMER FOUNDATIONS THAN SUCH SLOGANS AS "SPECIAL RELATIONS" OR "INDIVISIBILITY" WHICH "TEND TO GIVE RISE TO UNNECESSARY EMOTION

AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS." LIKE LEE HE DOWNPLAYED BILATERAL DIFFICULTIES AND EMPHASIZED LARGER AREAS OF COMMON INTERESTS. HE ALSO STRESSED NEED FOR MORE FREQUENT MEETINGS. BETWEEN TWO PMS AND "COLLEAGUES" TO KEEP FULLY AWARE OF EACH OTHERS VIEWS. THESE, HE SAID, SHOULD BE TREATED AS NATURAL AND A MATTER OF COURSE.

5. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON NOVEMBER 15, RAZAK TERMED HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH LEE "FRANK, WIDE-RANGING AND SINCERE" AND FELT THE VISIT "USEFUL AND STIMULATING." HIS MAIN POINT WAS CLEARLY THAT "TRANSIENT DIFFERENCES. . . SHOULD NOT IMPAIR THE BASIC UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION WHICH EXIST"

BETWEEN SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA. HE WELCOMED FACT THAT HIS VISIT HAD AROUSED LESS "PUBLIC EMOTION THAN WAS UNFORTUNATELY THE CASE IN THE PAST." HE FURTHER STATED, "OUR PEOPLES ARE BEGINNING TO ACCEPT THAT, HOWEVER CLOSE OR INTIMATE OUR TIES, THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN WE WILL ACT INDEPENDENTLY AND SEPARATELY BASED ON AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION AND OUR OWN INTERESTS." RAZAK AND LEE TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF OTHER TOPICS DURING TOASTS AND PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH REPORTED SEPTEL.

6. COMMENT: TONE OF VISIT WAS GENERALLY SIMILAR TO THAT PREVAILING DURING LEE'S VISIT TO KL IN 1972. UNLIKE THAT PREVIOUS MEETING, HOWEVER, NO SPECIFIC BILATERAL PROBLEMS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SOLVED. IN FACT, AS REFTEL INDICATED NONE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN ON THE AGENDA. MAIN POINT FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION WAS THAT SINGAPORE-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS ARE NOT ON FRIENDLY STATE-TO-STATE BASIS AND ARE EXPECTED TO STAY THAT

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WAY. RAZAK IMPLIED IN SEVERAL OF HIS REMARKS THAT MALAYSIA'S RELATIONS WITH SINGAPORE WERE ON SAME

PAR AS MALAYSIA'S RELATIONS WITH HER OTHER NEAR SOUTHEAST ASIAN NEIGHBORS, INDONESIA AND THAILAND.

7. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT INDICATES PRINCIPAL RESULT OF VISIT WILL BE INCREASED EXCHANGE OF MINISTRIAL AND OFFICIAL VISITS AND EFFORT TO LESSEN COMPETITIVE, ONE-UP-MANSHIP BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF TWO COUNTRIES.
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